

MARCH 10, 2022

# Conference Report

## How Inclusive is a Sustainable Tomorrow?

• LIVE  
Webinar

*On the Occasion of International Women's Day*



**MARCH 10, 2022**  
**11:00 AM -12:30 PM**  
**(Beirut time)**

**#IWD2022**



On the occasion of International Women’s Day 2022 (IWD), the AUB Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs (IFI), in partnership with the Swedish Dialogue Institute for the Middle East and North Africa, organized a webinar titled “How Inclusive is a Sustainable Tomorrow?”. The webinar, which was held on March 10, 2022, was co-moderated by Ambassador Charlotta Sparre, Director of the Swedish Dialogue Institute for the Middle East and North Africa, and Karma Ekmekji, Senior Fellow and lead advisor to the WPS initiative at IFI. This event was part of the “Gender Equality Today for a Sustainable Tomorrow”.

Speakers from various sectors shared their experiences in relation to peacebuilding efforts and the roles they play in promoting inclusion in decision-making processes. The panelists focused on the importance of increasing women representation, as well as the relationship between the Women, Peace, and Security Agenda (WPS) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). They also shared recommendations on how they could work towards achieving inclusive representation in different sectors and at policy and decision-making levels.

In their opening remarks, Ekmekji and Sparre stressed the importance of inclusion in all work on peace and development. Sparre stated that there are many countries in the world that are going through conflicts currently, most prominently Ukraine. But while recognizing the far-reaching effects of this war, she reminded of not forgetting other ongoing conflicts, including in the MENA region. She also stressed the importance of continued engagement in addressing international, regional, and national challenges, most notably the effects of climate change. Sparre highlighted the need for inclusive participation, including representation of women, in the international agendas, such as the SDGs, the Addis Ababa Agenda, the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, and the agendas on Women, Peace and Security and on Youth, Peace and Security.

In her opening words, Assistant Director at IFI, Yara Mourad highlighted the importance of International Women’s Day and the efforts done by IFI to incorporate the WPS agenda in major events with the support of UN Women. In this context she mentioned that this event is part of the activities of the WPS research initiative at IFI that aims to introduce research and innovative ideas from the MENA region and to tackle regional and global challenges addressed in the WPS Agenda. Moreover, she welcomed and thanked all the guest speakers who joined to show the importance of inclusivity in sustainability.



Following Mourad, Alexandra Dier, WPS Advisor to the UN Women Regional Office for Arab States, stressed that without women's peace and security, there is no peace and security for the society as a whole.

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**“The achievement of full human potential and of sustainable peace and development is not possible if one half of humanity continues to be denied its full human rights and opportunities”**

*-Aleksandra Dier*

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The Keynote Speaker, Sofia Calltorp, Sweden's Ambassador for Gender Equality and Coordinator of the Feminist Foreign Policy shared her country's experience on gender equality and inclusivity. In 2014, Sweden was the first country in the world to launch a feminist foreign policy that aims to address discrimination against women and girls in a holistic manner.

Over the past eight years, Sweden has worked on advancing both the SDGs and the WPS agenda with an integrated gender perspective in all its foreign policy efforts, from trade policy to development cooperation. With only 13% of women as peace negotiators, the country has pushed towards more inclusion when considering peace and security, including through establishing a women's meditation network with expertise from distinguished Swedish diplomats and practitioners. Calltorp also stressed the importance of women's economic rights and participation and the crucial role they play in society.

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**“Gender equality is a prerequisite to achieve peace, democracy, and sustainable development”**

*-Sofia Calltorp*

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## Applying a WPS lens to the SDGs

Ola Sidani, Independent Consultant and SDGs specialist, presented highlights of the SDG's and the WPS reporting toolkit that will be published by IFI with the support of UN Women. She explained that the toolkit aims at providing SDG's practitioners with a better understanding of the WPS agenda through cross mapping the WPS indicators with the SDG's indicators of goals 5, 16 and 17. This will allow for better reporting on SDG's while applying a WPS lens.

In her presentation, Sidani explained that the unforeseen challenges facing humanity have pushed the need for inclusive planning and policy cohesion. According to her, it is important to bridge disciplines to help people from different practices understand each other of the WPS and SDG's indicators and developing reporting toolkit does that in a way that allows them to integrate different aspects where needed and optimize policymaking. Building on the importance of integrating and bridging disciplines, Sidani mentioned that SDG practitioners need to have a better understanding of the WPS agenda. She added that sustainable development acts like a dynamic leadership concept that can set a framework for public policies and good governance in planning and optimizing reforms.

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**“We want to make the WPS agenda accessible for policy makers who are not experts in sustainability or women issues”**

*-Ola Sidani*

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“Women are the heart of society, and they play a role in accelerating its development,” said Sidani, while explaining that this makes SDG's practitioners realize that there are concrete interlinkages between the issues of development and those of peace and security



## **Panel Discussion: The link between SDGs and the WPS Agenda**

*Overcoming discrimination and inequality in the context of climate change, through inclusive processes*

Following Sidani's presentation, a panel discussion was moderated by Sparre and Ekmekji and hosted: Ramy Boujawdeh (COO of Berytech) ; Majd Mashharawi (Co-founder and CEO of Sunbox), Iyad Abumoghli (Director of Faith for Earth at UNEP), and Soad Shalaby (Ambassador and Director General of the Egyptian African Center for Women).

On a question on the relationship between SDGs and the WPS agenda, Ramy Boujawdeh, who is working on entrepreneurship and innovation support, underlined that connecting the SDGs and WPS is vital, including in supporting innovations and entrepreneurs. He mentioned that the work of Berytech ensures equality in income among genders and support economic empowerment of women. Their main focus is on sustainable agriculture, a field where the number of women is growing and higher income is generated. This in turn is creating more prosperity, which brings greater prospects for peace and security.



**“We cannot have social resilience if there is no inclusiveness”**

*-Ramy Boujawdeh*



He explained that women have been facing challenges that affect the economy in the MENA region and beyond, mainly in the agricultural field. Accordingly, there's a need for involving women in economic activities. According to him, we should work more on fighting barriers such as women's access to education and to the labor force. Boujawdeh underlined that men are equally responsible and should take a more active part in contributing to the changes needed.

Majd Mashharawi, a young woman entrepreneur from war-torn Gaza, reminded that the more peaceful a country is, the easier it is for it to focus on achieving the SDGs. She shared her own impressive story of having – against all odds – started two companies to meet essential development needs of her community, in terms of housing, energy and water through sustainable solutions. Her first company GreenCake created bricks from ash and rubble to rebuild damaged buildings and infrastructure. The second company, SunBox, provides affordable solar system that produces renewable energy to alleviate



the effects of the energy crisis in Gaza, where access to electricity is severely restricted. Masharawi shared that it had been hard to break the social constructs and norms to be able to achieve her dream, but it had been possible thanks to support from her immediate family and community. In the end the impact of her work didn't only break the glass ceiling in Gaza, but also in the wider region. Majdarawi stressed the close link between peace and development as peaceful environments are what allow access to resources.

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**“The link between the SDGs and peace is really important. Yet, it is missing in so many different stages worldwide”**

*-Majd Mashharawi*

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Dr. Iyad Abumoghli, with long experience of environmental work, brought up the complexities of global challenges and how they affect all people, differently. He highlighted the special vulnerabilities of women in poor and marginalized areas and communities. Natural resources are vital in achieving sustainable development, but are also drivers of conflict. He referred to the security council's acknowledgment in 2019 that climate change is one of the most serious human security issues the world is facing. He added that the number of women and girls who are prone to be affected by vulnerability will increase due to the impacts of climate change. Furthermore, he mentioned that women will be facing more socio-cultural constraint as a result of climate change and the challenges it brings.

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**“From a positive side, women play an instrumental role in conflict resolution, conflict prevention and peacebuilding processes”**

*- Dr. Iyad Abumoghli*

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Dr. Abumoghli stressed that overcoming discrimination in responding to climate change must be systemic and institutional, and countries should commit to it. Intentional and unintentional inequalities and discrimination towards women should be in focus when responding to climate change. Creating a policy dialogue will lead to systemic inclusion and increased attention towards disadvantaged women in international and national decision-making processes on climate change's.



Ambassador Soad Shalaby mentioned the upcoming COP27 meeting that Egypt will be hosting this year, and said that the event will “highlight the importance of gender issues through focusing on gender equality, gender mainstreaming, and climate change.” She added that the link between gender issues and climate change is “very obvious as women are bearing the consequences most of the challenges resulting from climate change.” Shalaby also reminded that women are more likely than men to face the consequences of conflict, including through interruption of access to basic needs such as clean water, food, education, and more. She explained that in conflicts, the burden of finding clean water is often placed on women and many environmental risks are particularly faced by women.

On a question on what support is needed in order to achieve inclusivity she highlighted the role that civil society can play in raising awareness regarding environmental problems and how women can respond to them. “Women should be supported and helped by being introduced to new technologies”. Shalaby also stressed the importance of supporting women in all fields, including in the important agricultural sector.



**“The link between gender issues and climate change is very obvious as women are bearing the consequences of all the challenges resulting from climate change”**

*-Ambassador Soad Shalaby*





## Key Recommendations

- Create conditions and platforms at all levels for inclusive participation of women in all parts of society, including in peace and development work as well as around policy and decision making tables.
- Further develop work that helps documenting areas of progress, challenges, and resources to contribute to development of evidence-based policies.
- Raise awareness on the growing evidence that more inclusive peace processes increase the chances of lasting peace, as well as on the potential gains for society as a whole if women's participation in the workforce increases.
- Support programs that strengthen access to women's economic rights and participation, including on entrepreneurship and innovation. Integrate gender-sensitive techniques at all stages of peace building (conflict prevention, conflict resolution, and post-conflict reconstruction), as well as in programs supporting the implementation of the wider SDG Agenda.
- Break down the respective silos between experts on SDG and on WPS in order to integrate an inclusive and gender sensitive approach into all policy and decision making processes.

**For More Information :** You can watch the full session again [here](#).

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*This Conference Report was written by Mia Karam and Rim Bitar, interns at the Issam Fares Institute*